

IN THE CLAIMS

1-15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 20, wherein the dietary fiber is selected from the group consisting of lignin, cellulose, hemicellulose, pectin, gums, arabic gum, carrageenan, waxes, resistant oligosaccharides, oligofructose, resistant polysaccharides, resistant starch and fructan.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 16, wherein the fiber is a fructan selected from the group consisting of levan, inulin and oligofructose.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 17, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization (\overline{DP}) of at least 20.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 18, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization (\overline{DP}) of at least 25.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for the inhibition or treatment of systemic infections in humans or vertebrates comprising administering, to humans or vertebrates having a systemic infection caused by pathogenic bacteria, a composition ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers[[,] ; and

one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients,

wherein the composition is administered orally or through tube feeding.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 20, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of *Clostridia*, *Bacteroides*, *Listeria*, *Candida* and *Salmonella*.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 17, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 40 g/day.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 17, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 25 g/day.

25-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) A method for the inhibition or treatment of an infection occupying the lymph or blood in humans or vertebrates comprising administering, to humans or vertebrates having an infection caused by pathogenic bacteria, a composition ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of

an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers, and

one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients,

wherein the composition is administered orally or through tube feeding.

28. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the dietary fiber is selected from the group consisting of lignin, cellulose, hemicellulose, pectin, gums, arabic gum, carrageenan, waxes, resistant oligosaccharides, oligofructose, resistant polysaccharides, resistant starch and fructan.

29. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the fiber is a fructan selected from the group consisting of levan, inulin and oligofructose.

30. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization $\overline{(DP)}$ of at least 20.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization (\overline{DP}) of at least 25.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of *Clostridia*, *Bacteroides*, *Listeria*, *Candida* and *Salmonella*.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 40 g/day.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 25 g/day.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 40 g/day.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 25 g/day.

37. (New) A method for the inhibition or treatment of systemic infections in humans or vertebrates, comprising

administering, to humans or vertebrates having a systemic infection caused by pathogenic bacteria, a functional food composition comprising an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers.